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ABSTRACT

This book examines the reactions of schools in Massachusetts and California to policies that sought to persuade schools to abandon or reduce tracking--the practice of grouping students into classes by ability and organizing curriculum by level of difficulty. The text is divided into 8 chapters: (1) "Implementing Tracking Reform," which sets forth the book's purpose and introduces the remaining chapters; (2) "The Origins of Tracking Reform," analyzes agenda setting and antitracking politics; (3) "The Schools Respond," discusses why some schools track and others detrack; (4) "Influences on Tracking Policy," compares tracked and untracked schools and discusses the influences on tracking policy, institutional characteristics of schools, the technical challenge of heterogeneity, and the organizational characteristics of schools; (5) "Governing Reform," describes educational governance in California and Massachusetts, the states' role in tracking policy, and the source of tracking policy; (6) "Tracking and Subject Area," details subject area subsystems, tracking in English and math, middle-school subjects as part of a discipline, and a math department rebellion; (7) "The Classroom, the Teacher, and Tracking Reform," discusses alternative instructional strategies and different philosophies; and (8) "The Fate of Reform," provides insights on the reform of tracking and casts doubt on prevailing explanations. Two appendices and 31 tables provide study methods and data, information on statistical issues, and a wide range of statistical analyses. (Contains an index.) (RJM)

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